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TEXTS AND STUDIES

CONTRIBUTIONS TO
BIBLICAL AND PATRISTIC LITERATURE

EDITED BY

J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON D.D.

HON. PH.D. GÖTTINGEN HON. D.D. HALLE

NORRISIAN PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY

VOL. V. No. 3.

THE HYMN OF THE SOUL

BY

PROFESSOR A. A. PEVAN

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*Bible -- N.T. -- Apocryphal books. Acts of
Thomas*

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THE HYMN OF THE SOUL

CONTAINED IN

THE SYRIAC ACTS OF ST THOMAS

RE-EDITED

WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

File -- N. J. -- Apocryphal books. Acts of Thomas

BY

ANTHONY ASHLEY BEVAN M.A.

FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE

LORD ALMONER'S READER IN ARABIC

CAMBRIDGE
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
1897

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Man höret oft im fernen Wald
Von obenher ein dumpfes Läuten,
Doch niemand weiss, von wann es hallt,
Und kaum die Sage kann es deuten.
Von der verlornen Kirche soll
Der Klang ertönen mit den Winden;
Einst war der Pfad von Wallern voll,
Nun weiss ihn keiner mehr zu finden.

LUDWIG UHLAND.

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PREFACE.

THE Poem which forms the subject of this monograph was first published and translated by the late William Wright, Professor of Arabic in the University of Cambridge, in his *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols. London, 1871). Since then the Syriac text has been re-edited in the third volume of the *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* (Paris, 1892), and two German translations, with copious explanatory remarks, have appeared—that of Karl Macke in the *Theologische Quartalschrift* (Tübingen) for 1874, pp. 3—70, and that of Lipsius in his work *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und Apostellegenden* vol. i. (Brunswick, 1883) pp. 292—300, vol. ii. pt. ii. (1884) p. 422.

As Prof. Wright's book has for several years been out of print, it seemed all the more desirable to re-publish the poem in a convenient form. If the piece were an integral part of the Apocryphal Acts, there might be some objection to thus detaching it from the context in which it stands; but, as a matter of fact, it is an independent composition and may therefore be treated separately. When we consider its antiquity and its highly original character, it must appear extraordinary that it should hitherto have attracted so little attention among theologians; if I succeed in exciting any further interest in this master-piece of religious poetry, the main object of my work will have been attained. At the same time I venture to hope that I have been able to contribute something fresh towards the elucidation of the text, in particular towards the comprehension of the metre, which is necessarily of great importance in textual criticism. Since the first editor, Prof. Wright, is universally acknowledged to have been one of the highest authorities in the department of Syriac literature, it may seem presumptuous, in a pupil of his, to think of supplementing, or modifying, the conclusions at which he arrived. I may therefore be allowed to state explicitly that the

p 48123

cases in which my interpretation differs from Prof. Wright's are few indeed as compared with those in which I have found his guidance invaluable. The first translator of so singular a document, however learned and however careful he may be, can scarcely hope to produce a perfect version, and Prof. Wright, as may be seen from his notes, was far from making such a claim. If I have ventured to explain some passages in a different manner, this has been chiefly in consequence of the fact that I was able to avail myself of various suggestions offered by other scholars who, during the last twenty-six years, have made a special study of the text. The most important of these contributions are due to Prof. Nöldeke; some of them appeared in his review of Prof. Wright's book (*Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* for 1871, pp. 670—679), others he privately communicated to Lipsius, in whose work (mentioned above) they are cited, others again I have received from him directly, either by word of mouth or in writing, together with his permission to publish them. For this great kindness I beg here to offer him my sincerest thanks. At the same time I desire to express my gratitude to the Editor of this Series, Prof. J. Armitage Robinson, for several suggestions which I have gladly adopted.

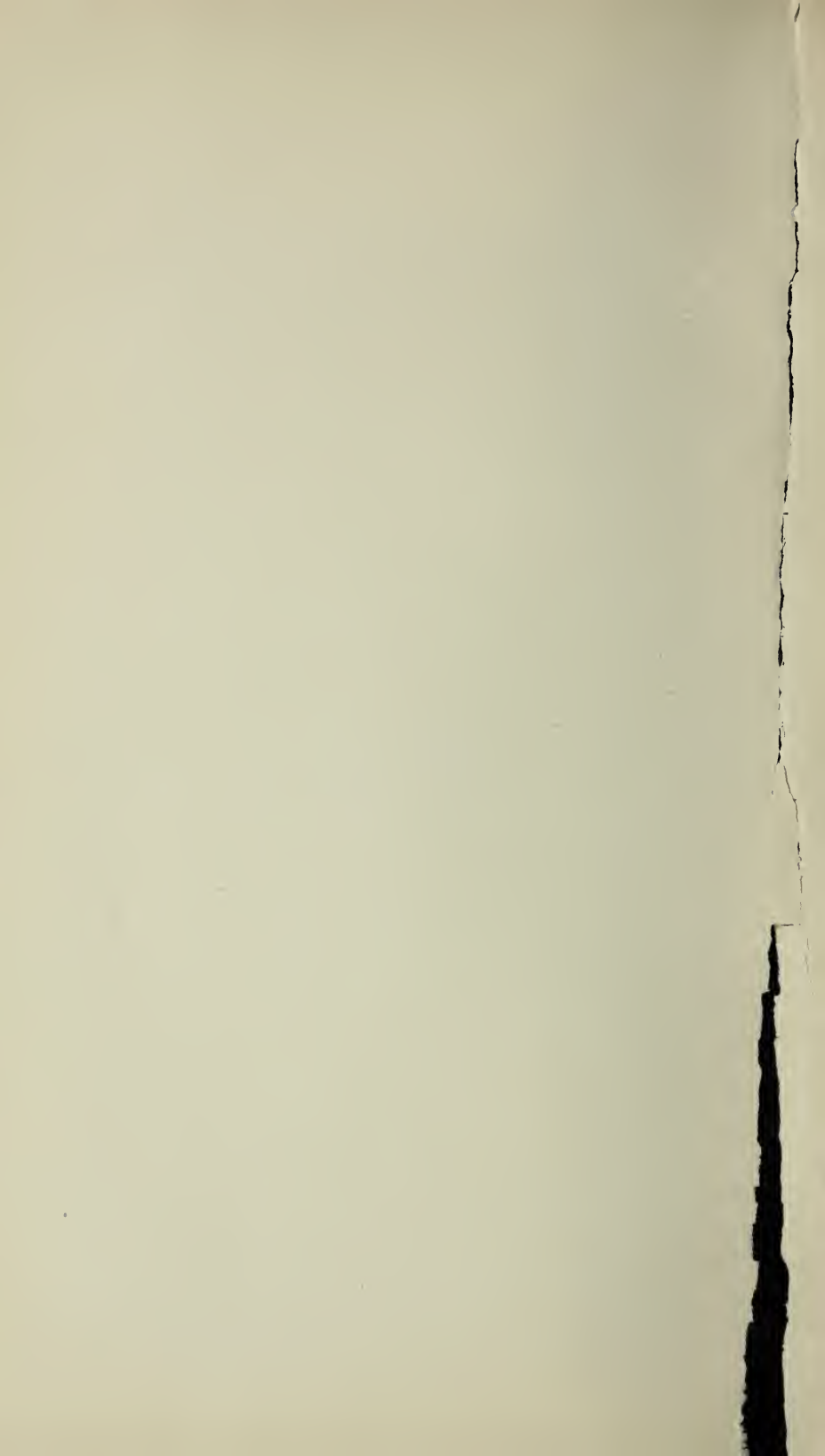
In order to insure the accuracy of the text I have, of course, examined for myself the MS in the British Museum. The only mistake worth mentioning which I have been able to detect in Prof. Wright's edition, occurs in verse 71 *a*; here Prof. Wright's *conjecture* is really the reading of the MS.

It need hardly be said that in the *Introduction* I have not attempted to give anything like a systematic analysis of the poet's theology, but have confined myself to indicating some of its more important features. The character of my work being mainly philological, I must leave the task of historical exposition to be completed by persons who possess a very much wider knowledge of the science of comparative religion.

A. A. BEVAN.

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INTRODUCTION

THE text here edited is based upon a single manuscript, Brit. Mus. Add. 14645, bearing the date A. Gr. 1247 (= A.D. 936) and containing a collection of Lives of Saints. For a full description, see Wright's *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, No. DCCCCLII (pp. 1111—1116). Foremost in the collection are placed the Acts of St Thomas, or, as the Syriac heading calls them, "The Acts of Judas Thomas the Apostle," which occupy 49 leaves. The Poem begins on fol. 30 *b*, and is introduced in the following manner. The Apostle, we are told, in the course of his journeys through India, was arrested and cast into prison by order of a king named Mazdai. In the prison he offers up a prayer, at the conclusion of which we read—"And whilst he was praying, all those who were in the prison saw that he was praying and begged of him to pray for them too. And when he had prayed and sat down, Judas began to chant this hymn. The Hymn of Judas Thomas the Apostle in the country of the Indians." Here follows the Poem, with the subscription—"The Hymn of Judas Thomas the Apostle, which he spake in the prison, is ended." But the Poem itself contains not the remotest allusion to the circumstances described in the preceding narrative, nor is there anything in the remainder of the narrative to indicate that the narrator was acquainted with the Poem. The question therefore arises, Was the Poem composed by the author of the Acts or was it derived from some other source?

This is not the place to discuss the origin and history of the Acts of St Thomas, for which the reader may refer to Lipsius, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und Apostellegenden* vol. i. pp. 225—347, vol. ii. pt. ii. pp. 423—425, and to Harnack, *Die*

Chronologie der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius vol. i. (Leipsic, 1897) pp. 545—549. Here it is enough to say that at these Acts are extant both in Syriac and in Greek¹, but it is still disputed in which language they were originally composed. In the Greek Acts of St Thomas the Poem with which we are concerned is absent, nor is any trace of it to be found in the Berlin MS of the Syriac text (Sachau Collection, No. 222)—see the *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* vol. iii. (Paris, 1892) p. 110 note². Hence the controversy as to the original language of the Acts does not in any way affect the Poem, for even those who believe the Acts to have been first composed in Greek admit that the Poem is not a translation but a purely Syriac work. This, as Nöldeke pointed out in 1871, is evident from the style and, in particular, from the metrical character of the piece. In these respects it differs greatly from the other hymns and prayers which the Acts contain. Both external and internal evidence therefore lead us to the conclusion that the Poem was borrowed from some extraneous source and inserted—at what period we cannot say—into the Acts. Happily it is not of any great importance to decide how it found its way into this context; the question which interests us is how it originated. We are here entirely dependent on internal evidence; for, as every Syriac scholar must see at once that the piece is much older than the 10th century, the date affixed to the MS tells us nothing which we might not have safely assumed.

The considerations of which we have to take account, in conducting this inquiry, may be briefly summed up as follows. Obscure as many passages undoubtedly are, the general drift of the Poem is quite clear, and cannot be better described than in the words of Nöldeke—"We have here an ancient Gnostic hymn relating to the Soul, which is sent from its heavenly home to the earth³, and there forgets both its origin and its mission until it is

¹ Edited by Max Bonnet, *Acta Thomae* (Leipsic, 1883).

² My friend Mr F. C. Burkitt informs me that after a very careful search he was unable to discover any part of the Poem among the fragments of the Syriac Acts of St Thomas in the Library of the Convent on Mount Sinai.

³ The choice of "Egypt" as the type of this world, the abode of evil, and particularly of "slavery" (couplet 44), is no doubt ultimately based upon the Old Testament. Nöldeke points out that a similar metaphorical use of "Egypt" is

aroused by a revelation from on high ; thereupon it performs the task assigned to it and returns to the upper regions, where it is reunited to the heavenly robe, its ideal counterpart, and enters the presence of the highest celestial Powers." But if the general Gnostic character of the Poem seems evident, the precise nature of the Gnosticism, the date and the authorship are by no means so easy to determine. The difficulty of answering these questions is due mainly to the extreme meagreness of our information respecting the history of Syriac literature at the period when Gnosticism flourished, namely from the 2nd century to the beginning of the 4th. Though there is clear proof that Gnosticism exercised a powerful influence in Syria at that time, not only have the writings of the Syrian Gnostics almost entirely perished—which was merely what we might have expected—but the writings of their orthodox opponents have, with few and small exceptions, perished likewise. The ages of Justin Martyr, of Irenaeus, and of Origen are practically a blank in Syriac literature ; the oldest Syriac writer of whom we possess any considerable remains is Aphraates, in the first half of the 4th century¹. Thus the problem before us is one which does not admit of anything like a final solution. Yet there are not wanting indications which, though uncertain if considered separately, may enable us at least to form a plausible hypothesis.

Of the Gnostic sects which existed in the Syriac-speaking lands by far the most important were the Bardesanists and the Manichaeans². These two schools had, it is true, some features in

ascribed to the Naasseni and the Peratae—see Hippolytus, *The Refutation of All Heresies* Bk. v. chaps. 2 and 11.

¹ In the discussions which have lately taken place respecting the origin of the Pēshittā version, this important fact seems to me to have been too frequently overlooked. Where scarcely any evidence exists, it is futile to bring forward "arguments from silence."

² On Bardesanes, see Merx, *Bardesanes von Edessa* (Halle, 1863) and Hort, Art. "Bardaisan" in the *Dictionary of Christian Biography* vol. i. (1877). Perhaps the best general account of Manichaeism is that by Spiegel in his *Erānische Alterthumskunde* vol. ii. (Leipsic, 1873) pp. 195—232 ; Kessler's *Mani* (Berlin, 1889) contains much valuable material on the subject, but should be used with great caution—see the review by Nöldeke in the *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* for 1889, pp. 535—549, and the note in the same periodical for 1890, p. 399.

common, for which reason Ephraim Syrus speaks of Bardesanes as "the teacher of Mānī"¹; but they nevertheless differed profoundly, and, if we may trust the testimony of the Arabic writer An-Nadīm, the founder of Manichaeism himself published refutations of the Bardesanists². It is therefore natural, in the case of a Gnostic document composed in Syriac, to begin by inquiring whether it can, with any probability, be ascribed to either of these sects.

That this Poem is not a Manichaean product hardly needs to be stated. The most prominent idea in it, namely that the Soul is "sent" from heaven to earth in order to perform a divine mission, is quite contrary to the principles of Manichaeism; for according to the Manichaean view the conjunction of the soul with the body is the result of a "mixture" of the elements of Light and of Darkness, which took place before the world was fashioned³.

Of the religious teaching of Bardesanes (A.D. 154—222) very little can be known with certainty. His writings have all been lost, and the celebrated Dialogue on Fate⁴ (or "the Book of the Laws of the Countries"), which was composed by his disciple Philip⁵, is mainly devoted to proving the theory of human free-will, to the almost total exclusion of religion properly so called. So scanty is the evidence on this subject that in recent years some have even doubted whether Bardesanes can rightly be described as a Gnostic⁶. But though we have no trustworthy account of his

¹ ܡܢܝ ܡܬܝܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܡܢܝܐ *S. Ephraemi Syri Opera selecta*, ed. Overbeck (Oxford, 1865) p. 63.

² G. Flügel, *Mani* (Leipsic, 1862) pp. 73, 102, where Mānī's "refutation of the Daisānites (i.e. Bardesanists) on the subject of the Soul of Life" is mentioned.

³ It may however be worth while to point out that the passage in which the victory of the soul over the power of evil is symbolised by the prince "charming" the serpent to sleep (couplets 58, 59) bears a curious resemblance to the Manichaean myth described by Titus of Bostra (ed. De Lagarde, Bk. i. chap. 17)—Θεασαμένη γὰρ ἡ ὕλη τὴν ἀποσταλείσαν δύναμιν, προσεκίσσῃσε μὲν ὡς ἐρασθεῖσα, ὁρμῇ δὲ πλείονι λαβοῦσα ταύτην κατέπιε καὶ ἐδέθη τρόπον τινα ὥσπερ θηρίον. κέχρηται γὰρ καὶ τῷδε τῷ ὑποδείγματι, ὡς δι' ἐμφθῆς τῆς ἀποσταλείσης δυνάμεως ἐκοιμίσθη. Instead of "the Hylē," the parallel passage in the *Fihrist* of An-Nadīm (G. Flügel, *Mani* pp. 54, 87) has "the Primal Devil," which is doubtless a more faithful representation of the Manichaean idea.

⁴ Edited by Cureton in his *Spicilegium Syriacum* (London, 1855).

⁵ See Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature* (London, 1894) p. 30.

⁶ See F. Nau, *Une Biographie inédite de Bardesane l'Astrologue* (Paris, 1897).

theological system as a whole, it is impossible to deny, first, that he was regarded by the orthodox as a dangerous heretic, and, secondly, that some at least of the heresies ascribed to him are such as other Gnostics are known to have taught. Thus our principal authority on the question, Ephraim Syrus¹, who lived about a century and a half after Bardesanes, writes—"The woe which our Lord uttered came upon Bardaišān, who taught that there are Seven Essences (*īthyē*), and whom the iron of truth cut off and left to himself"². These last words imply that Bardesanes was, if not formally excommunicated by the ecclesiastical authorities, at least considered as one outside the pale of the orthodox Church. Ephraim's accusations against Bardesanes fall under three principal heads—(1) that he denied the resurrection and regarded the separation of the soul from the body as a blessing³, (2) that he held the theory of a divine "Mother" who in conjunction with "the Father of Life" gave birth to a being called "the Son of the Living"⁴, (3) that he believed in a number of lesser "gods," that is to say, eternal beings subordinate to the supreme God⁵.

Now it is remarkable that these three "heresies" all appear distinctly in the Poem before us. There can be no doubt that the Egyptian garb, which the prince puts on as a disguise and casts away as soon as his mission is accomplished, represents the human body. The emphatic declaration that the "filthy and unclean garb" is "left in their country" conveys an unmistakable meaning; it would be difficult, in an allegorical piece, to deny a material resurrection more absolutely. The true clothing of the soul, according to the poet, is the ideal form which it left behind in heaven and will reassume after death. As for the Father of Life,

¹ To the usual references in the writings of Ephraim add *Comm. in Epp. Pauli* (on the apocryphal Third Epistle to the Corinthians), Armenian version, Venice 1836, translated into Latin by the Mechitarists, Venice 1893; a translation of this section, by Prof. Hübschmann, is given in Zahn's *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons*, 1890, vol. ii. pp. 595 seq.

² *S. Ephraemi Syri Opera omnia* (Roman ed.) vol. ii. p. 550.

³ This is the accusation most frequently and most vehemently urged—see *S. Ephraemi Syri Carmina Nisibena*, ed. Bickell (Leipsic, 1866), hymns xlvii and li.

⁴ Roman ed. vol. ii. p. 557. Whether Hort be right in identifying the "Mother" with the Holy Ghost, who, in the passage immediately following, is represented as giving birth to two daughters, I do not venture to determine.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 443, 554, 558.

the Mother, and the Son of the Living, they here figure as the Father "the King of kings," the Mother "the Queen of the East," and the Brother "the next in rank." Finally the "lesser gods" appear as the "kings" (couplet 38), who obey the command of the King of kings. In addition to these ideas we here find others which are not expressly ascribed to Bardesanes but are nevertheless perfectly consistent with what we know of him. Thus the Platonic doctrine of reminiscence (*ἀνάμνησις*), which is expressed with such distinctness in the Poem (couplets 11, 55—57), can hardly have been unknown to Bardesanes, who, according to Epiphanius, was skilled in Greek as well as in Syriac¹; moreover the Dialogue written by a disciple of Bardesanes, to which I have already referred, is so obviously modelled on the Platonic dialogues as to imply that the works of Plato were read in the circle to which the author belonged.

The foregoing considerations do not indeed suffice to prove that this Poem is a Bardesanist work, but they render it at least highly probable. Whether we have any reason to believe that it was composed by Bardesanes himself—as Nöldeke suggested, with some hesitation, in the year 1871—is a much more difficult question. Ephraim Syrus (Roman ed. vol. ii. pp. 553, 554) speaks of the hymns (*madhrāshē*) of Bardesanes, and mentions, in particular, a collection of 150 songs (*zēmīrāthā*), after the number of the pieces in the Psalter. In another homily (*ibid.* pp. 557, 558) Ephraim professes to give a few short quotations from Bardesanes, which appear to be in the five-syllable metre². But since Sozomen and Theodoret speak of Harmonius, the son of Bardesanes, as a writer of hymns, it has been supposed by Hort that Ephraim may have fallen into the mistake of ascribing the works of the son to his more celebrated father. The Poem now under discussion contains nothing, so far as I am able to see, which might not

¹ *Corpus Haeresiologicum*, ed. Oehler, vol. ii. pt. ii. p. 144.

² Macke, in the *Theologische Quartalschrift* for 1874, p. 51, endeavours to prove that one of the citations in question, consisting of two lines, is in the six-syllable metre; but to me this seems very doubtful. There is however no reason to assume that the five-syllable metre was the only one used by Bardesanes, for Ephraim (Roman ed. vol. ii. p. 554) expressly describes him as having introduced "measures" (*ῥυθμῶν*), and it is by no means impossible that all these citations are taken from the same poem.

be attributed with equal probability to either. With regard to the important question of the *date*, Nöldeke has remarked that the mention of the "Parthians" (couplet 38 *a*), as the ruling race in the East, decidedly favours the hypothesis that the piece was composed before the overthrow of the Parthian dynasty in A.D. 224; he also observes that the allusion to Maishān as a great centre of trade (couplets 18, 70) points in the same direction.

Whatever may be the ultimate verdict of scholars as to the exact date and authorship of this composition, it will always deserve careful study on account of the light which it throws upon one of the most remarkable phases in the religious history of mankind. Gnosticism is here displayed to us not as it appeared to its enemies, not as a tissue of fantastic speculations, but as it was in reality, at least to some of its adherents, a new religion. Though the religious conceptions of the author are, in some respects, very closely akin to those of the early Christians, he nowhere refers directly to the New Testament, nor does he even allude to the historical facts on which Christianity is founded¹. Yet he does not speak doubtfully, as one feeling after truth; his convictions, such as they are, respecting the realities of the unseen world, rest upon what he believes to be a direct revelation, symbolised by the living letter "which the King sealed with his right hand." Until this state of mind is understood, the nature of Oriental Gnosticism and of the struggle which it long maintained, against Paganism on the one side and traditional Christianity on the other, must remain a mystery.

The Metre.

At the first appearance of the Poem Nöldeke remarked that it was written in verses containing, as a rule, six syllables each. This is undoubtedly the case; but no one, so far as I am aware, has hitherto pointed out that the verses are arranged in *couplets*. A glance at the English translation will show that, while the first line of a couplet is often closely connected in sense with what follows, there is always a pause, though sometimes a slight pause

¹ See the very interesting remarks on this subject by Harnack, *Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius* vol. i. p. 546.

only, at the end of each second line. The only passages in which this arrangement appears to be abandoned are couplets 25, 68 and 71. The first of these passages is admittedly unintelligible; in the second, sense can be obtained only by altering the text. Accordingly Wright proposes to read ~~ܠܐܝܢܐ~~ (for ~~ܠܐܝܢܐ~~); but the assumption of a lacuna suffices to account for the syntactical difficulty.

With regard to the number of syllables in each line, it is impossible, in consequence of the uncertainty of the text, to give accurate statistics. Moreover Syriac verse-writers allow themselves great license in the insertion and suppression of vowels. But it will be found, on inspection, that in this Poem about 70 per cent. of the lines consist of 6 syllables or, at least, may be made to consist of 6 syllables by assuming some ordinary license¹. In a considerable number of cases (about 18 per cent.) a line seems to consist of 7 syllables, and in some others (about 9 per cent.) of 5. By assuming *unusual* licenses of pronunciation the list of exceptions may, of course, be reduced, but even then some cases remain in which the normal number of 6 syllables cannot be obtained without some change of the text, although there is no other sign of corruption—see 18 *b*, 24 *b*, 27 *b*, 31 *b*, 35 *b*, 49 *b*, 76 *a*, 84 *a*, 86 *b*, 95 *b* (7 syllables) and 21 *a*, 24 *a*, 29 *a*, 47 *a*, 54 *a*, 79 *a*, 81 *b*, 89 *a*, 100 *a* (5 syllables). It will be observed that where there is one syllable too many the line is generally the second in the couplet, where there is one syllable too few the line is generally the first. The only lines which, at first sight, seem to have 8 syllables are 67 *a* and 104 *b*; one line (77 *a*) seems to have only 4. It is therefore possible that the poet was guided rather by his ear than by a strict metrical rule in determining the exact length of each half of a couplet.

¹ By an ordinary license I mean, for example, the shortening of *a'irēthan* to *irēthan* (65 *a*), of *ennōn* to *nōn* (80 *a*), and the lengthening of *madhnēhā* to *madhenēhā* (3 *a*), of *rēshīm* to *arēshīm* (55 *a*), etc.

TEXT

(Asterisks indicate a supposed lacuna.)

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| הא ארז זבד אל | 1 |
| הבדל כחלאל כחל אב | |
| החלאל חלאל חלאל | 2 |
| החלאל חלאל חלאל | |
| החלאל חלאל חלאל | 3 |
| החלאל חלאל חלאל | |
| החלאל חלאל חלאל | 4 |
| החלאל חלאל חלאל | |
| החלאל חלאל חלאל | 5 |
| החלאל חלאל חלאל | |
| החלאל חלאל חלאל | 6 |
| החלאל חלאל חלאל | |
| החלאל חלאל חלאל | 7 |
| החלאל חלאל חלאל | |

*(In the Translation, dots indicate that the Syriac text is corrupt
or unintelligible.)*

- 1 When I was a little child,
 And dwelling in my kingdom in my Father's house,
2 And in the wealth and the glories
 Of my nurturers had my pleasure,
3 From the East, our home,
 My parents, having equipped me, sent me forth.
4 And of the wealth of our treasury
 They had already tied up for me a load,
5 Large it was, yet light,
 So that I might bear it unaided—
6 Gold of
 And silver of Gazzak the great,
7 And rubies of India,
 And agates (?) from the land of ẖushān (?),

- 8 ܡܕܢܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ
 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
 9 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
 10 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
 11 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
 12 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
 13 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
 14 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
 15 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
 16 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ
 ܕܡܡܥܐ ܕܡܠܝܬܐ

8^a MS ܡܡܥܐ9^a MS ܕܡܡܥܐ12^b MS ܕܡܡܥܐ15^b MS ܕܡܡܥܐ16^a MS ܕܡܡܥܐ

- 8 And they girded me with adamant
Which can crush iron.
- 9 And they took off from me the bright robe,
Which in their love they had wrought for me,
- 10 And my purple toga,
Which was measured (and) woven to my stature.
- 11 And they made a compact with me,
And wrote it in my heart that it should not be forgotten :
- 12 "If thou goest down into Egypt,
And bringest the one pearl,
- 13 Which is in the midst of the sea
Hard by the loud-breathing serpent,
- 14 (Then) shalt thou put on thy bright robe
And thy toga, which is laid over it,
- 15 And with thy Brother, our next in rank,
Thou shalt be heir in our kingdom."
- 16 I quitted the East (and) went down,
There being with me two messengers,

- 17 ܐܠܗܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
 ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
 18 ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
 ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
 19 ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ
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- 17 For the way was dangerous and difficult,
 And I was very young to tread it.
 18 I passed the borders of Maishān,
 The meeting-place of the merchants of the East,
 19 And I reached the land of Babel
 And entered the walls of
 20 I went down into Egypt,
 And my companions parted from me.
 21 I betook me straight to the serpent,
 Hard by his dwelling I abode,
 22 (Waiting) till he should slumber and sleep,
 And I could take my pearl from him.
 23 And when I was single and alone,
 A stranger to those with whom I dwelt,
 24 One of my race, a free-born man,
 From among the Easterns, I beheld there—
 25 A youth fair and well favoured
 * * *
 26 * * * *
 * * and he came and attached himself to me.
 27 And I made him my intimate,
 A comrade with whom I shared my merchandise.

- 28 ܠܝܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܪܝܬܝܢ
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- 28 I warned him against the Egyptians
And against consorting with the unclean;
29 And I put on a garb like theirs,
Lest they should insult (?) me because I had come from afar,
30 To take away the pearl,
And (lest) they should arouse the serpent against me.
31 But in some way or other
They perceived that I was not their countryman;
32 So they dealt with me treacherously,
Moreover they gave me their food to eat.
33 I forgot that I was a son of kings,
And I served their king;
34 And I forgot the pearl,
For which my parents had sent me,
35 And by reason of the burden of their . . .
I lay in a deep sleep.
36 But all these things that befel me
My parents perceived and were grieved for me;
37 And a proclamation was made in our kingdom,
That all should speed to our gate,
38 Kings and princes of Parthia
And all the nobles of the East.

39. ܠܡܢ ܕܠܐ ܕܢܝܢܐ
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- 39 So they wove a plan on my behalf,
That I might not be left in Egypt,
40 And they wrote to me a letter,
And every noble signed his name thereto:
41 "From thy Father, the King of kings,
And thy Mother, the mistress of the East,
42 And from thy Brother, our next in rank,
To thee our son, who art in Egypt, greeting!
43 Up and arise from thy sleep,
And listen to the words of our letter!
44 Call to mind that thou art a son of kings!
See the slavery—whom thou servest!
45 Remember the pearl
For which thou didst speed to Egypt!
46 Think of thy bright robe,
And remember thy glorious toga,
47 Which thou shalt put on as thine adornment,
When thy name hath been read out in the list of the valiant,
48 And with thy Brother, our . . .
Thou shalt be . . . in our kingdom."

- ܐܡ ܠܬܝܠܬܐ ܐܬܝܠܬܐ 49
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- 49 And my letter (was) a letter
Which the King sealed with his right hand,
50 (To keep it) from the wicked ones, the children of Babel,
And from the savage demons of . . .
51 It flew in the likeness of an eagle,
The king of all birds;
52 It flew and alighted beside me,
And became all speech.
53 At its voice and the sound of its rustling,
I started and arose from my sleep.
54 I took it up and kissed it,
And loosed its seal (?), (and) read;
55 And according to what was traced on my heart
Were the words of my letter written.
56 I remembered that I was a son of kings,
And my free soul longed for its natural state.
57 I remembered the pearl,
For which I had been sent to Egypt,
58 And I began to charm him,
The terrible loud-breathing serpent.

- 59 ܡܬܠܡܝܢ ܡܬܠܡܝܢ
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 ܡܝܬܝܢ ܡܠܡܝܢ 60
 ܠܡܝܢ ܕܠܒܢ ܡܠܡܝܢ
 ܠܡܠܝܬܝܢ ܡܬܠܡܝܢ 61
 ܠܚܢ ܕܠܒܠ ܠܡܠܝܬܝܢ ܕܠܒܝܢ
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59^b MS ܡܠܬܐ ܠܚܢ63^a MS ܠܠܡܠܝܬܝܢ65^a MS ܠܡܠܝܬܝܢ66^a MS orig. ܠܡܠܝܬܝܢ

- 59 I hushed him to sleep and lulled him into slumber,
For my Father's name I named over him,
- 60 And the name of our next in rank,
And of my Mother, the queen of the East;
- 61 And I snatched away the pearl,
And turned to go back to my Father's house.
- 62 And their filthy and unclean garb
I stripped off, and left it in their country,
- 63 And I took my way straight to come
To the light of our home, the East.
- 64 And my letter, my awakener,
I found before me on the road,
- 65 And as with its voice it had awakened me,
(So) too with its light it was leading me
- 66
Shone before me with its form,
- 67 And with its voice and its guidance
It also encouraged me to speed,

* * * *

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ܐܢܬܐ ܕܢܝܢܐ ܐܢܬܐ 70

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ܐܢܬܐ ܕܢܝܢܐ ܐܢܬܐ

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ܐܢܬܐ ܕܢܝܢܐ ܐܢܬܐ

ܐܢܬܐ ܕܢܝܢܐ ܐܢܬܐ 76

ܐܢܬܐ ܕܢܝܢܐ ܐܢܬܐ

68^b MS ܐܢܬܐ

71^a ܐܢܬܐ (sic)—the ܐ is quite distinct in the MS

72^a MS ܐܢܬܐ marg. ܐܢܬܐ

72^b MS ܐܢܬܐ

73^a MS ܐܢܬܐ

76^b MS ܐܢܬܐ

68 * * * *

And with his (?) love was drawing me on.

69 I went forth, passed by

I left Babel on my left hand,

70 And reached Maishān the great,

The haven of the merchants,

71 That sitteth on the shore of the sea

* * * *

72 And my bright robe, which I had stripped off,

And the toga wherein it was wrapped,

73 From the heights of Hyrcania (?)

My parents sent thither,

74 By the hand of their treasurers,

Who in their faithfulness could be trusted therewith.

75 And because I remembered not its fashion—

For in my childhood I had left it in my Father's house—

76 On a sudden, as I faced it,

The garment seemed to me like a mirror of myself.

- 77 77
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77^a MS ܕܠܠܐ77^b MS ܕܠܠܐ82^a MS ܕܠܠܐ (*sic*) the ܐ being a later addition.

- 77 I saw it all in my whole self,
Moreover I faced my whole self in (facing) it,
78 For we were two in distinction
And yet again one in one likeness.
79 And the treasurers also,
Who brought it to me, I saw in like manner,
80 That they were twain (yet) one likeness,
For one kingly sign was graven on them,
81 Of *his* hands that restored to me (?)
My treasure and my wealth by means of them,
82 My bright embroidered robe,
Which with glorious colours ;
83 With gold and with beryls,
And rubies and agates (?)
84 And sardonyxes varied in colour,
It also was made ready in its home on high (?).
85 And with stones of adamant
All its seams were fastened ;
86 And the image of the King of kings
Was depicted in full all over it,

- 87 87
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87^a MS ܥܠܡܐ88^b MS ܥܠܡܐ90^b MS ܥܠܡܐ

- 87 And like the sapphire-stone also
Were its manifold hues.
- 88 Again I saw that all over it
The motions of knowledge were stirring,
- 89 And as if to speak
I saw it also making itself ready.
- 90 I heard the sound of its tones,
Which it uttered to those who brought it down (?)
- 91 Saying, "I
Whom they reared for him (?) in the presence of my father,
- 92 And I also perceived in myself
That my stature was growing according to his labours."
- 93 And in its kingly motions
It was spreading itself out towards me,
- 94 And in the hands of its givers
It hastened that I might take it.
- 95 And me too my love urged on
That I should run to meet it and receive it,
- 96 And I stretched forth and received it,
With the beauty of its colours I adorned myself.

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- 97 And my toga of brilliant colours
I cast around me, in its whole breadth.
- 98 I clothed myself therewith, and ascended
To the gate of salutation and homage;
- 99 I bowed my head, and did homage
To the Majesty of my Father who had sent it to me,
- 100 For I had done his commandments,
And he too had done what he promised,
- 101 And at the gate of his princes
I mingled with his nobles;
- 102 For he rejoiced in me and received me,
And I was with him in his kingdom.
- 103 And with the voice of . . .
All his servants glorify him.
- 104 And he promised that also to the gate
Of the King of kings I should speed with him,
- 105 And bringing my gift and my pearl
I should appear with him before our King.

NOTES.

2 b **ܡܢܢ** lit. "caused to rest," hence "made to enjoy," cf. the use of **ܢܨܢ** "rest" for "enjoyment."

3 a The word **ܡܠܬܐ** "home," derived from the Assyrian *mātu* "land," occurs thrice in this poem, but is very rare in other Syriac writings.

3 b **ܐܬܢܐ** lit. "gave me provision (**ܐܬܢܐ**) for the journey."

4 b Wright supposed **ܐܠܬܬܬܐ** to be a mistake for **ܐܠܬܬܬܐ** "they took abundantly" (lit. "they made abundant"). Nöldeke suggests that **ܐܠܬܬܬܐ** is here the longer form of **ܠܬܐ**. In Syriac **ܠܬܐ** usually means "perhaps," but, like the Jewish Aramaic **כבר**, it may also mean "already," and thus sometimes corresponds in meaning to the Arabic **فد**. Compare the Mandaitic **ܠܬܐ** or **ܠܬܐ** "already" (Nöldeke, *Mandäische Grammatik* p. 202).

6 a If the MS reading be correct, we must render "gold of the land of the upper ones." In the Syriac translation of 1 Macc. iii. 37, vi. 1 **ܐܬܬܬܐ ܠܬܐ** "the upper lands" are the mountainous regions of Media and Persia, as contrasted with the low-lying plains of Babylonia. Perhaps **ܐܬܬܬܐ ܠܬܐ** may be a poetical variation of the same phrase. Nöldeke proposes to read **ܐܬܬܬܐ ܠܬܐ** "the land of the Geli"—see the *Dialogue on Fate* in Cureton's *Spicilegium Syriacum*, p. 25 of the Syriac text, last line, p. 19 of the English translation. The Geli (**οἱ Γῆλοι**) were a people who inhabited the district now called Gīlān, on the southwestern shore of the Caspian.

6 *b* Gazzak or Ganzak, the Γάζακα of Strabo, the גזק of the Talmud, now called *Takht-i-Sulaimān*, was a locality in Atropatēnē (Ādharbāijān) containing a famous Zoroastrian temple—see Nöldeke's *Tabarī* (Leyden, 1879) p. 100 note 1, and Georg Hoffmann's *Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer* (Leipsic, 1880) pp. 250—253.

7 *b* "Agates"—so Wright, cf. couplet 83 *b*. But elsewhere the word ܐܓܬܐ seems to mean some kind of textile fabric. On ܐܓܬܐ Wright remarks, "Perhaps ܐܓܬܐ *Kāshān*, in Persia, N. of Ispahan. In Cureton's *Spicil. Syr.*, p. ٣٥, the ܐܓܬܐ are mentioned as a *Bactrian* tribe." Nöldeke identifies the ܐܓܬܐ with the people called ܓܘܫܐܢ in *Tabarī* (ed. De Goeje, i. 820 l. 1) and thinks that these are here meant by the poet.

9 *a* Instead of ܐܓܬܐ other parts of the poem have ܐܓܬܐ (couplets 14 *a*, 46 *a*, 82 *a*)—in 72 *a* the scribe carelessly writes ܐܓܬܐ for ܐܓܬܐ, and the correction ܐܓܬܐ appears in the margin. In 82 *a* we find a similar correction. Thus it would seem that everywhere ܐܓܬܐ is the original form, and ܐܓܬܐ a scribe's emendation. This view is confirmed by the fact that ܐܓܬܐ, used substantivally, is peculiar to this poem, whereas ܐܓܬܐ occurs elsewhere, though only in the abstract sense of "brightness."

10 *a* ܐܓܬܐ "toga" is throughout the poem construed as masculine noun.

12 *a* Wright suggests that for ܐܓܬܐ "and if..." we should read ܐܓܬܐ "saying, If..." But it is also possible that one or more couplets have fallen out before 12 *a*, and I have therefore retained the reading of the MS.

12 *b* ܐܓܬܐ, for ܐܓܬܐ, is a conjecture of Nöldeke's, accepted by Wright. The word ܐܓܬܐ "pearl," as Nöldeke

coupled with Maishān and Babel, makes it impossible to suppose that the poet is alluding to some obscure village, and we are therefore forced to assume either that he called some well-known city by a name of his own devising, or else that the text is corrupt. The latter hypothesis is decidedly the more probable. Nöldeke, in 1871, suggested that we should read **ܒܫܝܦܐ** *Borsippa*, which is graphically very plausible; but Borsippa lay immediately to the south-west of Babylon, whereas the context here requires a place on the way from Babylon to Egypt. Accordingly Nöldeke is now disposed to prefer *Mabbōgh* (Syr. **ܡܒܒܗ**, Arab. **مَبِج**), i.e. Hierapolis in Northern Syria. The objection, urged by Wright, that Mabbōgh is too far to the North, does not seem to be conclusive, for although it was possible to travel from Babylonia to Egypt by a more southern route, the northern route was the easier and probably the more usual one.

21 b **ܐܣܦܢܝܗ** "dwelling" is the Persian *aspanzh* or *aspanj* (mod. Pers. *sipanj*), which properly means "a lodging-place for travellers." The Syriac word should probably be pronounced *ashpazzā*.

23 b I have here adopted the interpretation of Lipsius ("den Mitgenossen meines Aufenthalts"); Wright translates "to my family."

25 b What **ܒܢ ܐܝܠܐ** means it is impossible to say. Wright translates, though with great hesitation, "a son of oil-sellers," pronouncing **ܒܢ ܐܝܠܐ**; Lipsius, on the other hand, proposes **ܒܢ ܐܝܠܐ** "a son of anointing" and compares the phrase **בֶּן הַיַּיִץ** in Zech. iv. 14. But the dislocation of the metre shows that there is here a lacuna, and conjectures are therefore hopeless.

29 b If the MS reading be correct, **ܐܠܐ ܢܝܚܝܢܐ** (Pael) would seem to mean "lest they should disgrace (insult) me." But

perhaps Nöldeke is right in reading ܢܚܝܢܐ (Aphel, from the root ܢܚ), i.e. "lest they should recognise me, that I...." ܢܚ is originally "to scrutinize," and hence in ordinary Syriac (e.g. Land, *Anecdota Syriaca* vol. i. 67 l. 20, 68 l. 1) means "to repudiate"; but in Jewish Aramaic and in the Christian Palestinian dialect it means "to recognise" (Hebr. הָכִיר).

31 *a* Instead of ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ we should expect ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ (Nöldeke).

35 *a* ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ would mean "their troubles, vexations." Nöldeke suggests ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ "their foods," Gr. τροφαί.

40 *b* Both syntax and metre require ܐܝܢܐ (as Nöldeke emends) instead of ܡܠܟܐ; the mistake is easily explained by ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ in 38 *b*.

43 *a* ܢܐ (from the root ܢܐܐ) would mean "shrink," and we are therefore justified in reading ܢܐܐ, with Nöldeke.

48 *a* A comparison with 15 *a*, 42 *a* and 60 *a* seems to prove that ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ is nearly equivalent in meaning to ܡܠܟܐ "next in rank." The word, as Wright observes, should properly be spelt with ܡ instead of ܡ, for in the Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Theophania* (ed. Lee, Bk. ii. § 19 l. 4) we find ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ, apparently meaning "rulers" or "chiefs." This term is not known to occur elsewhere, and its origin is altogether obscure.

48 *b* ܡܠܟܐ "with him" can hardly be right. The analogy of 15 *b* would lead us to expect ܡܠܟܐ "heir," but as this word could not easily be changed into ܡܠܟܐ it is perhaps more probable that the poet wrote ܡܠܟܐ "a dweller"—cf. 1 *b*.

53 *a* With ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ "the sound of its rustling" (so Wright), a rendering which Lipsius regards as doubtful, compare the Peshittā 1 Kings xviii. 41 ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ = קול המון הַנְּשִׁים.

54 *b* The emendation ^{לְשׁוֹנֵהוּ}, for the strange form ^{לְשׁוֹהוּ}, is accepted by Nöldeke.

56 *b*. "And my free soul (lit. my freedom) longed for its natural state (lit. its nature)"—the verb ^{חָסַד}, properly "to miss" something which one has lost (Arab. ^{فَقَدَ}), is here used as in Ephraim's *Carmina Nisibena* ed. Bickell p. 10 l. 9 ^{כְּחִסְדִּי}
^{לְשׁוֹנֵהוּ} ^{לְשׁוֹנֵהוּ} ^{לְשׁוֹנֵהוּ} ^{לְשׁוֹנֵהוּ} "Lo mine ears long for the voice of my vine-dressers!" Wright translates "my noble birth asserted its nature."

57 *b* The reading ^{חִיִּיִּיִּי}, as compared with ^{חִיִּיִּיִּי} in the parallel passage (45 *b*), seems to be confirmed by 34 *b*.

59 *b* For the Ethpeel ^{יִצְחָק}, in the sense "to mention," see the examples given in Payne Smith's *Thesaurus*.

66 *b* The text is here quite unintelligible.

68 *a* The first line of this couplet seems to have contained some masculine noun to which the form ^{נִי}, in the second line, refers. We should therefore probably read ^{נִיִּיִּי} with masc. suffix.

72 *b* Since ^{נִי} is masculine (see note on 10 *a*), we must read ^{נִיִּי}, with Nöldeke.

73 *a* This line is doubtless corrupt in the MS. That *two* places should be named would be very strange, for we can hardly suppose that the poet meant to represent the "robe" as having been preserved in one locality and the "toga" in another. Thus Wright's rendering "from Rāmthā and Rēḵen" presents a serious difficulty, quite apart from the fact that the two names cannot be identified. I have ventured to read ^{מִן־הַרְעָנָא} ^{מִן־הַרְעָנָא} "from the heights of Hyrcania." The Old Persian name of Hyrcania,

which occurs in an inscription of Darius I (Spiegel, *Die altper-sischen Keilinschriften* 2nd ed: p. 22), was *Warkāna*, of which the modern form *Gurgān* (Arab. *Jurjān*) is merely a phonetic corruption. It is important to observe that according to Strabo (Bk. xvi. chap. i. § 16) the Parthian kings were accustomed to spend a part of the year in Hyrcania, and the Sāsānians also appear to have had a royal residence in that district (see Nöldeke's *Tabarī* p. 77). Being moreover a high mountain region Hyrcania might naturally be chosen by the poet as the type of the heavenly home.

76 *a* "Faced"—both here and in 77 *b* Wright translates "received," in accordance with the use of the verb in the Pēshīṭtā, Luke xv. 27 (ܡܠܝܟܐ = αὐτὸν ἀπέλαβεν). But the usual meaning of ܡܠܝܟܐ is "to face," "to go to meet" (Arab. أَقْبَلَ), and this seems to be more appropriate here, since it is not till 96 *a* that the prince actually "receives" the garment.

76 *b* Unless we assume, against all analogy, that ܡܠܝܟܐ is here construed as feminine, we have either to substitute ܡܠܝܟܐ for ܡܠܝܟܐ, or else to read ܡܠܝܟܐ ܡܠܝܟܐ ܡܠܝܟܐ "I seemed to myself like the mirror of the garment." The former alternative gives the better sense, for the idea seems to be that the robe (conceived as a rational being) was aware that the prince did not recognise it, and therefore *made itself like him*.

77 *a* Read ܡܠܝܟܐ, and in the next line ܡܠܝܟܐ, with Nöldeke.

81 *a* The construction of this clause is not clear; we should expect ܡܠܝܟܐ ܡܠܝܟܐ ܡܠܝܟܐ, as Nöldeke proposes to read. Or perhaps, as Wright suggests, we should substitute ܡܠܝܟܐ or ܡܠܝܟܐ for ܡܠܝܟܐ, and render "whose hands restored."

82 *b* It is difficult to believe that **𐤏𐤁𐤁𐤁** is right here, as the use of the same verb in 82 *a* and 82 *b* would be very awkward. Possibly **𐤏𐤁𐤁𐤁** is a mistake for **𐤏𐤁𐤁𐤁** (Aphel) "shining."

83 *a* It seems probable that here a fresh clause begins.

84 *a* Whether **𐤏𐤁𐤁𐤁** is a mistake for **𐤏𐤁𐤁𐤁**, or merely another pronunciation of the same word, cannot be determined.

84 *b* The word **𐤏𐤁** "also" presumably refers back to 6 *a*—8 *b*, where gold, rubies, agates and adamant are mentioned as part of the equipment of the prince.

87 *a* Read **𐤏𐤁𐤁** for **𐤏𐤁𐤁** (Wright).

90 *b* Instead of the meaningless **𐤏𐤁𐤁𐤁** Wright suggests **𐤏𐤁𐤁𐤁**, which I suppose to be a misprint for **𐤏𐤁𐤁𐤁**.

91 *a* This verse and the three following are extremely obscure. In the first place, it is not clear whether the speech uttered by the "robe" ends at 91 *b* or at 92 *b*; whichever view we adopt, some difficulties arise. The phrase [**𐤏𐤁𐤁**?] **𐤏𐤁𐤁** **𐤏𐤁𐤁** "the active in deeds" (Wright) is very suspicious. Since **𐤏𐤁𐤁** is elsewhere treated as feminine, we should expect **𐤏𐤁𐤁**, and for the same reason we should expect **𐤏𐤁𐤁** in 92 *b*, if the robe is still speaking.

91 *b* Instead of **𐤏𐤁** Nöldeke proposes **𐤏𐤁** "whom they reared in the presence of my father," or perhaps "for they reared me, etc." But as the preceding words are so doubtful I have not ventured to change the text.

92 *b* To whom does the suffix in **𐤏𐤁𐤁𐤁** refer? Possibly the idea may be that the "labours" performed by the prince in Egypt produced a corresponding effect upon the robe which he had left behind him.

93 *b* "Spreading itself out," lit. "pouring itself." Wright translates ܐܬܠܐ by "over me," but this is scarcely favoured by the context.

99 *b* Read ܐܬܐ, with Wright. In the last few verses of the poem the "Father" seems, at first sight, to be distinguished from the "King of kings," whereas in 41 *a* they are identical. On the assumption that the text is correct, the only way out of the difficulty is to suppose, with Nöldeke, that in 99 *b* the "Majesty" (lit. "brightness") of the Father denotes a person distinct from the Father himself, and that the "Majesty" is the subject of the verbs in 102 *a* and 104 *a*. In the Mandaitic writings, the very same word (*zīwā*) is applied to a particular order of heavenly beings. Whether the "Majesty" of the Father is identical with the "next in rank," as Nöldeke suggests, seems less certain.

101 *a* ܐܬܬܝܢܐ "his princes" is derived, as Nöldeke has shown in his *Tabarī* p. 501, from the Persian *waspur* lit. "son of a house," i.e. a member of one of the seven great families (called by the Arabic historians *ahlu-l-buyūtāt*).

102 *a* ܐܬܐ "me"—this use of ܐܬܐ, though common in the Jewish Targums, is extremely rare in Syriac. But it is not to be regarded as a mere Hebraism, for in a Palmyrene inscription (De Vogüé, *Syrie Centrale* (Paris, 1868—1877) No. 15, p. 17) we read ܐܬܐ ܠܢܐ ܝܬ ܠܓܝܢܝܐ "he brought the legions hither."

103 *a* For ܐܬܐܝܢܐ, which Wright gave up as hopeless, Lipsius proposes to read ܐܬܐܝܢܐ "with the voice of the Spirit"; but it would be a less violent change to read ܐܬܐܝܢܐ "with the voice of praise (*δόξα*)."

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